

## **Shropshire Bus Services: Shrewsbury & Atcham Constituency Labour Party**

This response has been compiled from discussions in a meeting open to all members at the end of September and further consultation via email to enable members who could not attend to submit their views.

Public transport, including bus services must sit within a clear overall strategic purpose, shared by local authorities and partner organisations, which recognises the climate emergency and includes related environmental issues such as air quality. The Labour Party is committed to a Green New Deal, which includes a number of commitments on transport including investment in electric buses, integrated public transport timetabling and local schemes which make walking and active travel safe and attractive.

The following points in relation to bus services in Shrewsbury and Shropshire were made:

- A well designed new bus station in the same location as the current one is essential. The current one, whilst a disgrace, is appropriately sited for connectivity with rail, and the new facility should include real-time timetable information, integrated ticketing, an attractive café and good toilet facilities, cycle parking and safe, attractive pedestrian access to the rail station.
- A major increase in the number and frequency of bus services, with buses running well into the evening and on Sundays and integration with Park & Ride. Replacement of diesel with electric buses, running frequently enough to promote usage. The right kind of bus services should be central to a green transport policy.
- Bus stops should also be well designed with shelters to include seating, current bus timetables and real-time electronic arrival information.
- As long as the current dirty diesel-fume-belching bus stock remains on the road, drivers need to switch off engines rather than let their engines idle if there is a delay in departure
- Park & Ride to become free or at a minimum price to dissuade cars from heading into town.
- A bus *service*, not a bus *business*, with the service in cooperative or public hands, not run for profit, and buses to have a clear price advantage over cars.
- End free on-street parking in Shrewsbury and continue plans to give priority to pedestrians in the town centre.
- Dispensations and assistance for older and disabled need to be built into any plans. This is particularly important given the topography of

Shrewsbury. Community transport services such as Dial A Ride to be supported and sustained.

- Continuing housing development on the outskirts of the town, especially a potential 5000 new homes in the vicinity of the proposed new North West Road, make it essential that a growing population is dissuaded from driving into town.
- Shropshire Council to appoint a 'Bus Champion'
- Reverse cuts in bus subsidies and to enter into partnership arrangements with bus companies to run electric buses as a service, with low fares, so that frequency, attractiveness, and accessibility of buses would encourage residents and visitors out of their cars and provide access to employment and to town facilities while cutting pollution, road injuries and fatalities.
- Any additional powers for local government under the 2017 Bus Services Act appear to be constrained by competition between providers but, within the current legislative options, Shropshire Council should look at the potential for Advanced Quality Partnerships.

## **Furthermore**

The Labour Group on Shropshire Council supports the Big Town Plan which has also been welcomed by the Labour Party.

One of its key themes is 'Making 'Movement Better' which inevitably advocates enhanced bus services. Indeed first on the list of "10 Goals for Shrewsbury" is:

"We want to make it much better for the pedestrian and cyclist, especially in the town centre. This means shifting the balance of priority given to movement across the town from the private car to walking and cycling and greater use of rail and bus."

At the recent National Labour Party Conference a motion on 'Green New Deal' was overwhelmingly adopted. Relevant key points are:

“Take transport into public ownership and invest in expanded, integrated, free or affordable green public transport that connects Britain, including:

Rail electrification;

Continued support for high-speed rail, because of additional capacity that it will create for rail freight on the West Coast Mainline, removing polluting HGVs and other vehicles from roads;

The transition to sustainably powered rail freight;

Creation of rail freight interchanges;

Community transport;

Investment in electric buses that can reconnect local communities;

Integrated public transport timetabling;

Local schemes that make walking and active travel safe, attractive, environmentally sustainable options, benchmarked against European practice;

A radical car scrappage scheme to increase electric vehicles.”